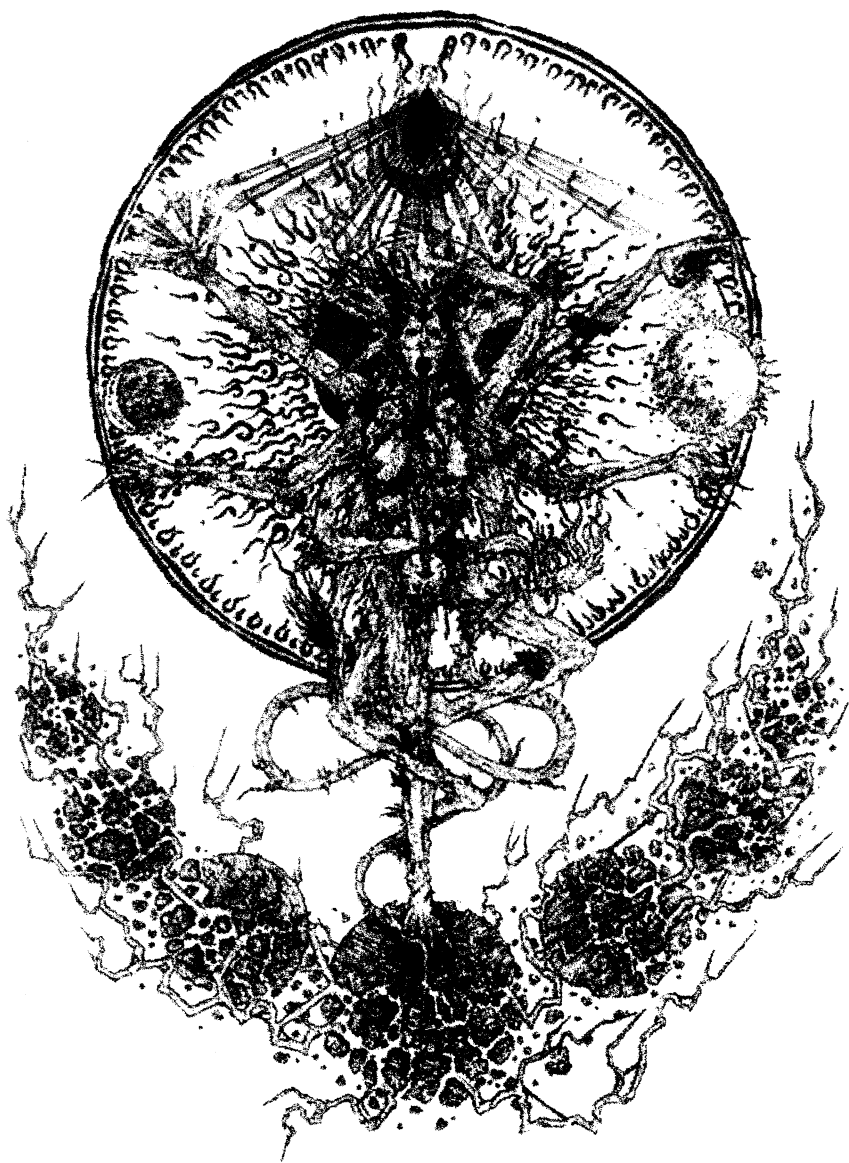


Expansive Individualism

and other writings by Pierre Chardon



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No discussion of the legendary anarchist-individualist Emile Armand would be complete without introducing his close friend, collaborator, printer, and typesetter Pierre Chardon. Pierre Chardon was the nom de plume of Maurice Charron, who was born in May 1892, in Châteauroux. Chardon rose to prominence in the French anarcho-individualist milieu during the post-war period, beginning with the publication of his anti-war tract *Les Anarchistes et La Guerre: Deux Attitudes*, a beautiful, treasonous retort to the tides of military madness which engulfed Europe in 1915, that was reprinted in anarchist newspapers worldwide. Chardon remains a stray figure in the English-speaking world, but considerable biographical material on him is contained in French anarchist historical overviews, where he's generally regarded as a fierce, articulate theorist who gave intelligent form to a heritage of radical individualism dating back to Zo d'Axa.

Anarchist individualism experienced an unprecedented florescence in France during the years 1910-1920, and the milieu it nourished became a refuge for a fascinating mosaic of intellectuals, crackpots, solitary malcontents and subversive dreamers drifting on the fringes of law and conventional morality. What bound together the ideas and activities of such a diverse assortment of thinkers into a unified blast was their affirmative discussion of the individual as the beginning and end of every political question. It was this belief in the innate powers and possibilities of every living individual that attracted Chardon to the select company of these "comrades of ideas" and motivated him to learn the skills of printing and typographic composition.

Chardon (whose pen name means "thistle") became a proficient printer who was capable of setting 600 letters an hour on a bicycle-powered machine that could only work with the combined efforts of three people: one pushing the bike pedals, another turning the wheel, and the third making the margin. Chardon also evolved into a highly respected writer whose essays were warmly received in several foreign anarchist journals, most notably the almanac *Tierra y Libertad*, *Freedom in London*, and *Mother Earth* in New York. Chardon's theoretical writings cut all ties with the muddled mystique of "proletarian revolution" which had dominated the anarchist and socialist movements for so long—along with the morality of self-sacrifice that went with it. Instead, Chardon selected, for his individualistic goals, other weapons: his own indomitable desires and dreams, and the strength, joy and magic of life.

Ever alert to the authoritarianism lurking in all revolutionary programs (from Marxism to Syndicalism to anarcho-communism), Chardon argued that

all political and cultural systems (regardless of rhetoric) compromised the uniqueness of the individual. In an article titled "Anarchisme et Marxisme" (La Melee, October 1, 1918) Chardon didn't hesitate to critique even the revered anarcho-communist Jean Grave, whose newspaper *Les Temps Nouveaux* had become biased towards Marxism when it resumed publication in 1916. Chardon then actually went on to formulate some early anarchist critiques of civilization and the hard shell of customs, habits and compulsions that constitute its daily economic rituals. Chardon was far more of a critic than an expounder of any fixed position, however, and the function of his writing was primarily to move people to thought and to a reexamination of their ideas.

From 1916-1918, Emile Armand (with Chardon as his principal collaborator) published a periodical called *para dela de la melee*, until he was imprisoned for circulating anti-statist and anti-militarist tracts and for allegedly "harboring a deserter". After Armand's sentencing to five years in prison by the War Council in Grenoble on January 4th, 1918, Chardon revived *para dela de la melee* and published it consistently from 1918-1920 under the shortened title *la melee*, often delivering copies to anarchist distribution nodes on his own bicycle. During this period Chardon also published *La Guerre* (a series of clandestine draft-dodging brochures) and one issue of *Le Semeur*, another anti-war journal. Chardon's last contribution to the anarchist press was the article "Stockholm et les Anarchists", which appeared in the October 1917 issue of *What Must Be Said*.

In 1920, following Chardon's death, the editorship of *la melee* was assumed by Chardon's colleague Marcel Sauvage. Sauvage changed the name of *la melee* to the new, Nietzschean "L'UN", which reflected a shift towards a more "aristocratic" interpretation of individualism and which drew in the participation and support of many avant-garde artists and writers who later became associated with Dada and Surrealism; that same year Sauvage joined forces with Florent Fels to launch *Action*, which was a literary counterpoint to the anarcho-individualist journal.

Aside from the tributes to Chardon which appeared in various issues of *l'en dehors*, numerous other biographical studies of him have appeared in France, including:

PIERRE CHARDON by G. (Journal du Peuple, in one of its issues from May 1919);

PIERRE CHARDON by Maurice Wullens (Les Humbles, June 1919); PIERRE CHARDON by Paul Meyer (issue of *l'action d'art*, 12 March 1920);

PIERRE CHARDON by Albin (in the June 1923 issue of *Vagabonds*);

SOUVENIRS by Paul Meyer (Le Libertaire, May 5th, 1924) and

IDEAS AND CONCEPTIONS OF PIERRE CHARDON, a 40-page mimeographed brochure, with a forward by Albin, that came out in 1924.

Pierre Chardon
by Emile Armand

Note: This article appeared in Pierre Chardon: Sa vie, Son action, Sa pensée, a tribute to Pierre Chardon that was published by l'en de hors.

In the eyes of biologists, death is quite simply a change of conditions – the inevitable result of vital wear and tear. Everything born is destined to perish. Sooner or later, according to the degree of resistance the organism puts up against the deteriorating actions of his surroundings. A day comes when the sum of assaults pushing toward the disintegration of a being overcomes the totality of its defenses. On that day, it is done, vital phenomena cease; this is death, collapse, decomposition, the “return to dust”.

However rigorously exact this explication of death may be, it simply cannot prevent us from deploring or regretting the loss of those whose acquaintance or frequenting gave us occasion to develop as individuals, to make us reflect, to augment our experiential knowledge. And I'm not talking about a sentiment of friendship, I'm sticking simply to the camaraderie of ideas, the fraternity of opinions. And this regret, we feel it all the more deeply since we feel that the being whose departure saddens us was torn away from life before having given his all, died “before his time” as the quaint popular saying goes.

Such is the thought which came to me when a letter, carrier of the painful news, came to me one beautiful May morning, to a house in the center of Nîmes, where I was vacationing, guided there by the denunciation of a wretched liar who, in order to win over the favor of military judges, accused me of encouraging his desertion. Yes, Pierre Chardon was cut down too soon, at the dawn of his intellectual labors.

In writing these lines, it seems just yesterday that I met Pierre Chardon for the first time, in Châteauroux, a very young and evolving comrade, sincerely seeking his way.

Others knew him at the time, but they have forgotten the path he took and the character of diverse activities which he pursued. He spared nothing to contribute – not his time, not the little influence he had at his disposal, not the few resources he could call his own.

I know something about that. Not only did Pierre Chardon take interest, becoming a distributor at hors du troupeau, at anarchie, while I took on that publication, and at Réfractaires, but when I thought, in 1915, the moment had come to make heard, within the fury of the sacred unions, the chimes of the individualist anarchist, he was my main collaborator at par delà la mêlée. We didn't always agree, we fought over small points, we would get carried away, we'd get to the point of bursting, but a word would suffice to bring us back into agreement, to make us see that we had never ceased being so. I have never met a comrade with whom I felt more at ease, more myself, freer in intimacy.

There was a point on which we never differed, for instance: a distrust and a disgust that inspired us, that which we called, between us, the "fucking reformed" – the old bohemians who became steady and respectable – the ex-free-lovers who went up the ranks to the support of honor and the virtues of conjugal life – the one-time illegalists posing as honest merchants – councilors of desertion who became anarcho-patriots – these vermin who, to make up for having changed tactics, drooled and still drool with admiration over those whose heart is strong enough to still be today what it was yesterday: outcasts of bourgeois society.

Pierre Chardon grew up in a severe and difficult school. Born into a poor working class family, he soon had to struggle with the familial milieu, then did not feel at ease in the social milieu where everything also conspired to prevent his development. Early on, he felt the injustices upon which this stifling society is based.

An unending dawn of curiosity aided him in gaining a rare intellect: nothing left him indifferent. Still very young, he frequented the labor council in Châteauroux, slipped in among the workers, assisted with their meetings and discussions. No book, no publication he could get his hands on seemed void of interest. Pierre Chardon was an autodidact in every sense of the word.

He couldn't help attracting the attention of his school teachers. His weak health led him to a colonie scolaire¹ for three consecutive years. That is where he met she who would, some years later, become his companion. He earned his primary school certificate; the obligation to earn a living forbade him from pursuing further studies.

Pierre Chardon did not want to just maintain relations with the libertarian milieu simply to research it; his temperament pushed him to give himself to it. Aided by a comrade who since has traveled the world, he became a peddler, visiting small towns and villages, distributing subversive tracts and brochures, sometimes holding meetings, confronting the contradiction; this is when he must have held his meetings on the "tragic religions". 1914 happens. One

[1] Translator's note: A charity school created to help underprivileged and sick youth in school.

still remembers, in the Département of Indre, the series of conferences he then held to expose the hoax of universal suffrage. He anticipated the world war, and didn't hesitate to denounce it. He was known from the north to the south of the Département and even beyond. From then on he was an outcast.

That same year, he went back to the girl that he knew as a child. Daughter of diehard bourgeoisie, her parents wanted to win her back, whence a mute and internal struggle, implacably stuck between two influences, that of progenitors and that of a companion who wants to keep the companion in whom he awakened the ideas that he held dear.

Economically, these were the best days for Pierre Chardon. His companion was in teaching. He worked as an accountant in a worker's restaurant. The idea came to him to begin a press. He saw therein a means of liberating himself from wage labor. Little by little, by great effort, by prodigious ingenuity, he succeeded in acquiring the essential materials. I still see his little workshop, in the back of a little garden, in Déols, on the side of the road from Châteauroux to Issoudun.

But then, suddenly, the war broke out and we'll see moreover that it was this which occupied his time during that fatal period. Thanks to his weak constitution he escaped conscription, but as he did not present himself before a discharge commission, they issued him a compulsory enlistment. He was sent to Poitiers, then to Parthenay. They held him. Happily, it was only for twenty days. Pierre Chardon did not want to live wearing a military uniform, even if it led to the detriment of his health, and he got his way.

It was at this time that I was arrested. Pierre Chardon did not want to abandon the work begun by *par delà la mêlée*; nor did he want it to hurt my defense. That winter, he went to Grenoble, assisted in my trial, returned indignant, literally furious at the judicial apparatus, having contracted a bronchitis that nothing would cure, against which his overworked body could do nothing, despite his iron will.

In vain, he spent the summer of 1918 in the country. Crushed by a labor above his abilities, his health did not recover. To complete the misery, his companion, Jeanne, was taken in 1918, by the plague that then ran rampant under the name Spanish flu. It was an overwhelming blow, but Pierre Chardon didn't let go. Those who took interest hoped that a winter vacation on the Côte d'Azur could extend his life a few months, maybe for two or three years. So he left for Nice, from where he edited *la mêlée* – which was followed by *par delà la mêlée* – with the same regularity as when he lived in Déols.

The climate seemed beneficial when, following a moment of imprudence, he found himself suddenly attacked by the flu. All hope of recovery vanished.

In April 1919, he went home, nearly incapable of heaving himself onto the coach. He didn't miss, for all of that, the publication of *la mêlée*; if he no longer had any illusions about his fate, he didn't want that to disappear with him. I have now a letter dictated on April 30th (he was confined to his bed and incapable of writing) concerning my liberation. May 2nd, he expired, following awful death throes, staying conscious to the end, struggling against death to the end. He would have reached his twenty-seventh spring, and it hasn't yet been ten years since that day.

It is true that Pierre Chardon suffered much from police harassment. Naturally, that doubled with the war and the advent of censorship. There came a time when the searches of his house occurred with such frequency that they would have discouraged the most tempered of hearts. They believed that he was involved with a whole host of offenses that he had nothing to do with, for that matter. Whatever the case may be, the police bloodhounds always left empty handed. It isn't an exaggeration to assert that the persecutions of which he was the target were not unrelated to the agitation of his sickness.

Although he was no "ferocious" individualist, as the cliché goes – despite his associationism, his mutualism, his contractualism – Pierre Chardon kept himself far from the classical conception of communist anarchism. He did not believe in a catastrophic transformation, *en masse*, of societies; he thought that it was with the friendly unity, chosen individuals or associations, that one must begin. Without a doubt he kept relations with the syndicalist opposition, with numerous communist anarchists, but those who knew him know that the type of communism that attracted him was that of practical relations, those of "common enterprises", on condition that a duly established and honestly discussed contract determined the relations of those desiring to participate in advance. That didn't prevent him from being a partisan of the vulgarization of ideas that he held dear, of propaganda with a great scope.

Pierre Chardon was not free of faults. Like all of us. But they were the faults of youth. He never hesitated to go back on a hasty assessment, or a rapid judgement, as soon as someone demonstrated that he was wrong. All of these defects appear minor compared to one of the qualities that dominated his character: his disinterest when it came to personal finances. He was among those who don't see propaganda as a means of turning a profit. Those to whom he rendered services – real services – won't soon forget his way of doing things on certain occasions that are useless to detail here. Precisely because of his disinterest, he wouldn't allow propaganda to languish for lack of resources.

I am forced to furnish in this edition an exacting presentation of the "mind of Pierre Chardon", understanding that he found his way through trial and error. I believe I have succeeded in giving his point of view on various subjects which preoccupied and still preoccupy the anarchist milieu in general.

The signatories of the biographical articles contained herein personally and intimately knew Pierre Chardon. I have kept to what anyone who knew him would have written about him. Perhaps the quality of this pamphlet is suffering from a literary perspective, but I have the impression that in proceeding this way I am conforming to the desires of this comrade who, right or wrong, hardly held “intellectuals” in esteem.

A few “purists” among the purists could reproach us for having published these pages. We aren’t undertakers, of course. We readily rise up against the cult of death. Our efforts are devoted to life and the living: the current and the immediate are the goals of our preoccupations. However, when one of our own disappears, having completed his course too early or having been prematurely relieved of his efforts, we are lacking in none of our convictions in expressing the pain caused by his loss. Moreover, we are not smug enough to close our eyes to the emptiness that certain deaths bring us. We know how to hate, but we also know how to love. We know how to preserve the memory of those who in traversing our existence, leave a trace. It is because this trace, as far as I am concerned, has remained so vivid that I wanted to dedicate at the very least a 32-page brochure to the memory of Pierre Chardon.

Moreover, I maintain as absolutely unjustifiable the oblivion into which the humble diffuser of ideas, this obscure organizer, has fallen, dying on the job. It’s true, Pierre Chardon did not achieve world fame; he was little appreciated outside of a small, much too small circle; he had to fight against the small-minded defiance of parvenus, the jealous animosity of the ambitious, the guardians of formulas, the supporters of orthodoxy. He frequented no literary salons; he knew that in those milieux, one is either tolerated or considered a curious specimen. No inner circle offered him a seat; the proposition itself would have cracked him up. He avoided every League, every Guild, every Association like the plague – anywhere he may have been forced to meet the stalwarts of the society whose institutions he combatted. The letters of his that I have prove all of this and also that he was rather hard on certain courtesans of the Renowned.

If Pierre Chardon overflowed with ardor, enthusiasm, activity, he was intransigent. Verbosity inspired pity in him; the verbosity of rhetoricians as that of revolutionaries. He wanted to “practice” in the field without waiting for the day after the Big Night or a problematic and chimeric New Dawn. He was neither an eminent philosopher, nor a famous author, nor even an industrious playwright, nor a libertarian *gen de lettre* for snobs and snobettes. Pierre Chardon was quite simply an artisan of action, an achiever who wanted to plough his furrow, and plow it well. Because he was not a “dear master” but a loyal propagandist believing in the efficacy of propaganda, does he deserve to be scratched so soon from the tablets of anarchists, of “comrades” for whom he gave his life?

“Our” Subjectivism

by Pierre Chardon

(translated by Vincent Stone)

We will repeat it without growing tired: that which differentiates anarchism from all intellectual syntheses, from all social systems, and constitutes a character all its own, is individualism. Only anarchism offers individual liberation and denies the value of so-called collective liberations, bought at the price of a thousand disavowals affecting the independence of the Me. It alone shows the dupery and the fraud of so-called social contracts vis-à-vis those the individual finds himself disarmed and without guarantees. Anarchism loses all reason for existence if it no longer continues the protest of the Ego smashed by the social Molochs, the individual affirmation of the right and the will to live outside of exploitation and tyranny.

For all of these reasons – and for others still – we are “subjectivists”. We attach considerable importance to subjectivity, to inner activity, to the formation and evolution of the thinking personality. The famous “I think, therefore I am” remains for us the expression of a primordial truth. A life without thinking isn’t worth living. We know that the general absence of free thought alone permits tyrants to reign without contest over the human herds, and that inner liberation seems to us an indispensable step that must inevitably precede any attempt at social liberation.

But the human mind, eager for absolutes, loving sharp formulas and definitive, although arbitrary, classifications, is content to widen the abyss between the Me and the Non-Me, between the Subjective and the Objective, between the Object and the Subject! Come from the most diverse philosophical horizons, men have exalted to excess the inner Me and brought the World down to the narrow limits of the thinking subject.

Under the pretext that all we know of the outside world is but the representation that we form of it, and that this representation varies from individual to individual, they have denied the existence of general truths and of a rational domain that is common, or could become so, to all men. Confusing the feeling Me with the reasoning Me, they have claimed that there are only individual truths, noting the multitude of outside interpretations furnished by different sensibilities. Some, pushing their reasoning to the end, deny the existence of all objective reality. A host of interpretations and conclusions followed from these conceptions.

Some of them preached detachment from outside objects, becoming apostles of an artificial freedom, which one achieves only after having abolished desire and broken with all connections attaching the individual to the earth. The exaggerated practice of pure contemplation leading them to the most

profound mysticism, they taught detachment and humility without realizing that the latter was but an exalted pride.

The others preached pride, a haughty toughness and isolation, forgetting that the individual cannot satisfy his needs and use his faculties without the aid of others. Many repudiated the efficacious means with which man is provided for the exploration of the world: observation and experiment, and claimed to replace them with metaphysical Intuition – sister of religious revelation. In brief, in the name of subjectivism, certain philosophers and moralists expounded often quite contradictory ideas, but all effectively result in the practice of the maxim: “Abstain and sustain”, offering the individual the serene joys of thought withdrawn into itself for its own refinement and purification as compensation.

Faced with these various interpretations, it is not useless to clarify again Why and How – as anarchists – we are subjectivists.

Excessively respectful of individual nuances, and desiring to see the birth and growth of strong personalities, courageous and tenacious souls, proponents of the most perfect tolerance: that which strives to make the realization of different conceptions of life in these various settings possible; so we don't at all renounce subjectivism. Individual consciousness always seems to us to be the *sine qua non* of all liberation.

But we are realists. Our subjective life begins when the sensation comes to bring the necessary food to the brain.

The outside world is not irrelevant to me, since it provides my thought with the materials it uses. Without a doubt I relate to everything that exists through myself, I cannot feel for my neighbor. But in addition to the purely subjective domain: that of sentimental nuances, does there not exist a more impersonal domain, constituted by a common intellectual knowledge? There are general truths against which no healthy brain can rise up against. This is how, in addition to purely personal learning, a collective domain of knowledge comes to be, a domain that I cannot abstain from without depriving myself of an excellent means of realization.

As for those who, in the name of subjectivism, consider desire to be a weakness, their ideal appears to us as barely reasonable as the ideal of those who want to banish us from reason in the name of the relativity of truth.

We want the mastery of self as much as anybody – the individual as slave to the passions cannot aspire to liberation. But let us not forget, “he who plays the angel acts like a beast”, a mystic – and a great one at that – has already proclaimed this.

Why would I destroy my desires, my passions, in lieu of helping myself to them, without serving them as a slave? Can I tear all of my vital aspirations from my being without mutilating it? The ideal of the Yogi does not suit us. Epictetus advising us to coldly welcome the death of a precious being makes us indignant!

We want to live body and soul, through the senses, the heart, the brain, step by step and simultaneously. Every division of being proves itself to us to be an obstacle to true happiness.

Our subjectivism in no way distances us from the objective world which it seems to us infantile to deny the importance and role.

No isolation, no systematic abstention seems reasonable to us.

Obligated to bridge the gap between subject and object, this is how we learn to harmonize the alleged opposites and to appreciate the danger of absolutes. And the necessity of outer life, the field of action for the reflective will, of effort with the risks it brings, leads us to search for the necessary conciliation between two fundamental tendencies of our being: the tendency to individuality, to isolation – and the tendency to sociability and association.

--From *par delà la mêlée*, n

The Democratic Illusion

by Pierre Chardon

(translated by Vincent Stone)

The democratic State does not, any more than the monarchic State, represent a contractual association. The randomness of birth inducts the individual into one or the other, and though democracies pretend to be based upon a social contract, they never put it up for discussion, while logically it should be reexamined by each generation called to bear the responsibilities that it implies. In law, the individual is considered an adult, since he is able to vote, but in fact he is treated like a child, incapable of being in charge of himself – since he must seek permission for anything the state regulates. It is true that the masses are content to believe in the superiority of its institutions without ever examining them deeply. Who then, even among anarchists, knew that before the 1st of August, 1914, the President of the Republic, by decree, and quite in accord with the constitution, could proclaim a general state of emergency?

A detailed critique of parliamentary government would be suitable here, as would a description of well-known means with which quite small and well-organized coteries “make” opinion and direct the destiny of a country.

The republican constitution is not opposed to the exercise of despotic power. We saw this clearly under the Convention, and many historians have described to us what tyranny weighed on the shoulders of the citizens of republican cities of antiquity. National unity obtained by the suppression of local life, administrative centralization, the quashing of separatist tendencies, and the institution of a State religion, which for being secular is nonetheless profoundly mystical – all of this is quite in accordance with this ideal of the One, Indivisible Republic which animated the Jacobins and by which their successors remain haunted.

If one considers that military obligations take long years from the individual, the impartial observer is obliged to note that in practice, the democratic state is as hierarchic, centralized, dominating and tyrannical as any other political form.

If democracies proclaim political equality, they take care not to let anyone establish economic equality as a starting point. They will not call material acquisition into discussion, nor share it, and proclaim all property to be “an inviolable and sacred right”, property, which in our societies, cannot be obtained but by exploitation or legal theft.

Also it is not paradoxical to claim that profoundly democratic countries, where the routine and laziness of aristocrats no longer conflicts with the brazenness of businessmen¹, create different castes and ways of life as accentuated as those of ancient oriental civilizations. The United States constitutes a striking example of this. There isn't a more democratic country. Here no secular traditions, no vanquished caste whose influence endures. Democracy right away, at the base. No aristocracy by birth, but an aristocracy by money: numerous, insatiable, no longer knowing how to spend their billions, while its pariahs – the immigrants – cram into slums.

All the revolutions from which democracies came were incited, led, and monopolized by the middle class, industrious, avid for money, desiring to see the barriers of a too-narrow traditionalism, opposed to the development of their riches, shatter. One cannot understand history without recognizing this fact. Republican capitalism, as Mirbeau described so well in *Les affaires sont les affaires!* (Business is business!) With the Marquis and Isodore Lechat, the two forces of exploitation collide:

That of yesterday, distant from realities, hungry for peace, a decadent class, to say it plainly, worn out by power and pleasure: and that of today, burning with activity, cynical, implacable in the struggle, with appetites all the more ferocious for being more recent.

But since they made us assist in the degeneration of the sovereigns and

their courtesans, and since they reminded us of a few of these instances of historical sycophancy which disarmed baseness by force, it is time to wonder if our democracies don't offer corresponding weaknesses.

Our modern military merchants, building fortunes upon cadavers, are they not dignified heirs of the *fermiers généraux*², traitors and sub-traitors, of the old regime? Were kings really the only ones to know the influence of megalomania paired with madness? A minister desiring his name to go down in history, and in whose case it is not at all necessary to more clearly identify, has given us, in France, an example; solely concluding important treaties without notifying his colleagues, and very surprised to then see them refuse to accept when these dealings would have taken effect.

"That's the work of aristocracies," you make me laugh! But you have never waited at the desk of a functionary, or, shortlisted, been subjected to the reprimand of a noncommissioned officer, or never even dealt with "specialists" of order for ignoring some incensed pride, some imbecilic brutality that the exercise of authority engenders in all who command...democratically. And you have never seen them flock, backs bent, rampant, with flattery in their mouths, before their superiors, arrogant before the weak, servile before their bosses?

Men of politics, they act like directors of the ship of State without special expertise. You speak to me of irresponsibility. But at least the king exists; you know the way to his palace, to his chest – you can go bang on the door, unsettle him perhaps. Go on then and unsettle and bang on the door of this bureaucratic machine – it will send you from one desk to another, from an ignorance to an incompetence, and it will be impossible for you to grab the responsible one by the collar, the true, the unique, the only, for there are too many of them!!

The kings live for the show, but they too maintain a façade. Among the initiated, they dress down, but among the electorate, the mask never falls, they must always bluff, lie, in a never-ending stream.

The followers too suffer specialized habits of the trade. Sovereigns of cheap junk, knowing quite well that everything is gained by baseness or sycophancy, they fill the antechambers of their elected officials as the others will line up to the ministers. Favoritism triumphs, and as under the reign of Louis XV, it is often thanks to a recommendation slipped under the pillow that certain ultra-fast political ascensions are made. No pride, no dignity, each hopes to obtain that which he desires by abjectly panhandling. And the recommendations come pouring in...

[2] Tr – The *fermiers généraux* was a private customs and excise organization in France; they became excessively rich during the 17th and 18th centuries.

When the representatives of this democratic authority parade in public: judges in red robes, dashing generals, ministers bearing various sashes – before the stripes, the multicolored plumes, the multicolored uniforms, the crosses, the medals, all apparel of the middle ages, which authority loves to adorn itself with, go then and see if it doesn't have the same effect on the assembled masses as the great mystical thrill of religious fear and blissful admiration that the king of France once aroused when he returned to his good town of Paris. Those who scoff or mock are the exception, and if you want to get yourself lynched, go then and make a bold shout among these ecstatic sheep before their herders!

This is how we know that democracies are as capitalist, as imperialist, as the other institutions of the State, that their leaders and their led suffer from serious deformities. In getting to the bottom of the problem, we note that they do not accord guarantees to minorities. As for the rest – the struggle of parties, transformations of the facade, superficial concessions – it no longer deludes us.

At base, control remains intangible, just as resignation and religion do, upon which its power rests. It adapts to circumstances like an agile Proteus – it concedes, when it must, to the necessities of the hour, but it always knows how to keep its privileges intact. We play its game in adopting the tenacious illusions it maintains.

Disrespectful, unbelieving, blasphemous, critical, we will not be duped by the democratic illusion. The master remains the master, the State remains the State, and we remain, we, their relentless enemies, whatever their protocols, up until the day where they leave us as we please, to experience the anarchist life, a tolerance they cannot accord us without abdicating.

– First published in 1913 as *Le Mirage Patriotique*, in a pamphlet format which quickly sold out (it was reissued in part by les éditions l'en dehors in 1925). This particular version was taken from *par delà la mêlée* n°30.

Intellectuals such as they are

By Pierre Chardon

Note: This article originally appeared in *par delà la mêlée*, n° 23 and was later reprinted by l'en dehors in a tribute to Pierre Chardon titled *Pierre Chardon: Sa vie, Son action, Sa pensée*.

...And yet we admire them too much, and close our eyes to elementary truths which are capable of making clear to us their true value. Two "intellectuals" in forty years have refused decorations from the State: Elisée Reclus

and Curie. That's it. Lovers of baubles, they whose daily commerce with eternal truths should incite disdain for puerile distinctions and brief favors avidly search for each and every one – in order to win them they act like uncultured brutes. Even better, they envy one another. O, these “intellectual” hatreds, these writer's jealousies, these savants' realities where the absence of scruples comes with the merciless desire to detract the adversary, and to crush him, what Balzac will describe them to us?

Never has a constituted power, an arbitrary authority lacked “intellectuals” for justifying its existence and its excess. The philosophers of antiquity justified slavery, with a few exceptions, and the most illustrious “intellectuals” of the great century groveled before the Sun King. Renan saw with a very sharp eye the mandarinat of “intellectuals” and a social caste system, where the vulgum pecus struggled for the benefit of these Sirs. And what to say about the hypocrisy of Kant, demolishing dogmas in the name of pure reason, counseling obedience to these same dogmas in the name of practical reason.

All, or almost – the exception proves the rule – despise manual labor, and proclaim themselves to be the executors of the “noble task,” believe themselves to be infinitely superior to those whom they serve, to those who feed them, clothe them, and house them. It's hardly surprising that they so easily forget their verbal revolts when the social edifice collapses and the organized lie needs them to maintain the permanence of all that they live on.

Dilettantes, snobs, they amuse themselves with ideas, juggle them without taking them seriously. They preach stoicism, living simply, and then live in opulent villas, own several personal servants, when they can; they surround themselves with sumptuous luxury. Economists – they hypocritically bemoan the horrors of war and laud the frenzied competition it produces. Literati – far from the trenches, they cash in on the “heroism” of others with grotesque and pitiful books. Men of good company – they don't want to host a man capable of taking what he needs when hunger gnaws away at him and destitution maddens him; but he likes frequenting select salons where you can meet all of the financial pirates... and elsewhere...

Since we have had a good look at them, let's not venerate the “intellectuals” to excess anymore. Let us stop looking to them as Messiahs, and quit addressing them with calls for humanity, good sense, reason... Always looking to them would be to consecrate their power, to recognize their moral authority. We now know what we can expect from them. To dwell on this would be weakness.

Additionally, to glorify those who haven't followed the crowd, to transfer our thoughtful and absolute admiration for those who have shown a bit more dignity and courage would be clumsy. For, even in his revolts, the “intellectual”

– aside from the Irish poets who were shot down during the war, and other rare exceptions – remains the dilettante, and not the man who devotes body and soul without requite! Almost always, he knows how to follow the rules, and doesn't burn bridges.

Our deep admiration goes to those who write their revolt with their blood, and not with ink, to those who live their truth and not to those who proclaim it in volumes upon volumes.

Portrait

by Pierre Chardon

(translated by Vincent Stone)

Going back over the course of my memories from childhood, I see you again, barely an adolescent, already pretentious and a poser. On the promenades of your administrative city, a big cigar in your trap, you tried to show off, you “acted like a man” barely even a kid yet.

Then, I lost sight of you. I only knew that you led the sanctimonious life, exempt of efforts, of a young bourgeois spared by paternal inheritance from the rigors of life. You followed vague studies at some school...

Years have passed, and here I find you again frequenting anarchist milieus, participating in our journals.

You acted like a comrade and, in the beginning, I considered you as such, despite the instinctive mistrust you have always inspired in me. I find again in you the youth of before, poser to the extreme, and my simplicity hardly accommodates those who resemble you: too done-up and detailed, with the vague allures of a made-up girl!

Little by little this wariness grew, and I doubted more than ever the seriousness of your character, knowing that you bragged – in the town of your birth – of leading the life of an irregular in Paris, taking credit for imaginary exploits to scandalize and “impress the bourgeois” !

I understood quickly that as a snob and a dilettante, you amused yourself at our expense: the freedom of our milieus, the ease with which one comes in and creates relationships to play a role there.

I knew you as a revolutionary died in the wool, patiently copying all of the articles from the Larousse concerning the materials whose usage brought Vaillant to “the widow,”¹ soliciting powerful and novel chemical formulas from nearby comrades with serious scientific knowledge; always carrying a loaded Browning on you. Then – before you know it – here you are a partisan

of non-resistance to evil, Tolstoyan, stoic in the manner of Han Ryner. Goodbye bombs, browning, plans to blow everything “through the sewers” (sic).

But this new pose could not modify your inner nature, and me, I know you well – chance has made us compatriots – I know that you have nothing like evangelic gentleness in you. Two hillbillies from your town who committed the crime of mocking your poser attitudes learned that at their own expense. You easily beat them, without danger or glory, with your fists and feet! Nice gesture for the so-called disciple of those whose wisdom is made of gentleness and “discretion,” “disdain for the unexpected” and fraternity!

It’s true that you have a gift for abusing those who don’t know you, and how to “fool” people. When you read an article, a brochure, a book, you chose an ambiguous, equivocal phrase, one permitting the splitting of hairs, a passage detached from its context, and you bombard the author with half-critical, half-flattering letters that let you enter into relations with him. Then you oppose his ideological adversaries with his literary rivals with whom you have also entered into relations. You give the metaphysician knowledge of the physician’s epistle, to the latter you communicate your mildly flattering dreamer’s appreciations; you stir up divergences; you enjoy the useless and furious tournament provoked by your cunning and your sense of intrigue; and all of that allows you to say negligently at the café: “Look here at what this biologist wrote about this philosopher”!

It’s that your victims, sometimes illustrious, have no idea that they are readily mystified by a schemer incapable of grasping or understanding the integrity of their works, but who is apt at puerile little discussions, dialectic artifice.

And the pretentious youth of old reappears in you when you spread out the letters thusly obtained – like you once did with arrogance in public places, spreading out cash gained from maternal generosity.

Oh, you know so well how to modify your appearances according to the milieus where you want to be accepted, you slip in everywhere like an eel! To create personal relations among the “notabilities” – of what are you capable?

Thusly have you been able to fool people who would be disgusted with you if you showed them your true face: snobbish, dilettantish, brutal, cynical, animated by a ferocious egoism, of a vanity without limits, void of any scruple.

I gladly would have let you pursue your career as an arriviste and schemer if you did not aspire to play a public role. Here you are today “director” of a journal, “man of letters,” “publicist.” As you know how to sound the alarm of leading intellectuals of all clans, one finds among your collaborators of

this sacred union, dear to our leaders, everything from an ultra-patriot war correspondent for a big evening journal to the main representative of philosophical pacifism.

And now here you are, daring to speak of the “cause” and of “Ideas” in the name of which and for which you invite those who really know you – and whose severe opinion you fear – to forgive your foulness. Indeed I say “your foulness,” for if I cannot say everything here, it must nonetheless be known that tattling, brutality, and seedy business – such as the exploitation of female prostitution – does not disgust you and that on occasion you have resorted to each one of these. According to your favorite line: “Isn’t everything prostitution?”

We’ve had enough of these propaganda adventurers who – without deep conviction, without moral propriety, without dignity – come along without lining up to sow their wild oats in our milieus.

Bourgeois, stay with the bourgeois; fund journals for the bourgeois if the journalistic ambition spurs you and if the desire to succeed possesses you. But no more of this pretension of making use of us to achieve your own goals!

No more subtle distinctions between the subjective and the objective. The outside cannot be good if the interior is spoiled. He who accumulates inconsistencies cannot speak in the name of an idea. A purification is needed. We need honest propagandists in the interest of our convictions.

–From *par delà la mêlée* n°33

Expansive Individualism

by Pierre Chardon

(translated by Vincent Stone)

To live is to affirm. Life, like fire, only exists on condition of expansion.

Since it rests on a principle of individualization, anarchism draws from a profoundly subjectivist philosophy. Indeed, only the inner life allows a being to know itself, to reveal to itself the fundamental tendencies which its activity must satisfy if it wants to avoid suffering and to conquer well-being. Only interior effort allows the individual to liberate himself from the illusions and mirages with which the milieu saturates him from the moment of his birth, to “realize himself,” which is to say a unique being possessing his own life, his originality, determined to react against the encroachments of the collective, as a resolute supporter of individual autonomy.

We know what we owe to the inner life, to the initiators who taught us

how to read into the mysterious depths where all underlying forces churn, and where at first we can only make out chaos and darkness. But we certainly don't want to put up arbitrary barriers between the Me and the Not-Me, to isolate the "Ego" from all that surrounds it and influences it, to claim that only moral liberty should be enough for it, that the only thing that matters is interior liberty.

Some have done that. Their error is not new. Thought, like vice, intoxicates its lovers, and creates for them a mental world different from palpable and tangible realities. Already, infatuated with metaphysics, people in lands of the Orient where the climate, the sky, and nature predispose them to profound reveries and prolonged meditations have, in their sacred songs, glorified the inner life as being the source of all science and all perfection.

See how they council the Yogi (ascetic), the Bhagavad-Gita:

"He should make a seat in a pure place... and there the spirit should strive for unity, master thought in himself, doing this, he achieves mental unity, in preparation for perfection...

In this way the yogi whose mind is tamed, always is in a continuous state of ecstasy, achieves bliss, whose completion is in oblivion, and which lives in me".

In this extinction, this absorption of the being into the great All, this union with the universal spirit: Nirvana, here you have what philosophers and religions have presented as the ultimate wisdom and supreme happiness.

Without a doubt, modern western philosophers who have made themselves champions of the inner life do not dare to preach systematic abstention and pure contemplation to us. But by the same fact that they accord an exaggerated importance to the inner life, they tend to disrupt the equilibrium between the inner life and the outer life that develops in every healthy organism.

Apart from those ardent individuals with a too-outgoing temperament, it is not good for a human being to hear too often: Abstain is one of the first words of wisdom, and to claim too often that he can have no effect on the outside and that the only worthwhile efforts are inner and subjective.

For some individualities of exceptional merit that such an ethic has been able to produce, how many abstentions, how much cowardice, how much resignation has it been able to justify and even cause, in shattering the spirit of action! Whether one admits it or not, it conducts one towards a practical resignation. Without a doubt Epictetus announcing in a calm voice to his master that he would break his leg in continuing his brutalities, attests to his moral superiority, but one might wonder if this attitude was not determined

more than anything by his physical powerlessness. In any case, if all slaves adopt such an ethic, even if they possess a rich and profound inner nature, their masters can sleep soundly!

This is how a vapid and accommodating individualism is born, a martyrless neo-stoicism, which disdains exterior reactions. Maeterlinck made it accessible to the people of the world, in mystical and obscure pages, and Han Ryner formulated it in this typical phrase: I can illuminate my own soul alone.

So, we would very much like to “illuminate our soul”, but not to place it tranquilly under shelter from the wind, the external shadows, the tempest of life, and the violence of wind gusts. The Yogi, the ascetic, who resolutely cuts all contact with the milieu, without a family, without friends, without passions, without desires, who banishes the affections born of contacts as The Bhagavad-Gita puts it, in no way resembles the *übermensch* in our eyes, but a mutilated, incomplete man, an atrophied being.

Reflection, meditation, that’s for a life that stores itself up, an effort that accumulates, energy which knows itself. It must burst into the outside so that it has a vital equilibrium, a healthy and normal life. Incubation precedes hatching; germination, blossoming, and once the seed of his inner thoughts have grown, in man just as in plants, it cannot help but flower without trouble.

Without a doubt, we know the effects of unreflective action: if man gives himself completely to action, to words that are thrown into the wind like so many seeds, without consideration or restraint, he empties himself of inner knowledge, and will soon become morally exhausted, powerless, annihilated. But it is possible to establish a rational equilibrium between mental assimilation and de-assimilation, as he establishes it in the analogous functions of physical nutrition.

The inner life is not the enemy of action, but exteriority prolonged for a long time calls for meditation. Similarly, when electrical accumulation expends its potential, it is time to recharge.

This Me that you recommend I “sculpt”, is it not but a vapid and perfected statue, if the sculptor did not submit to the proof of experience, to laborious trials and error, failures; if he was not looking outside to fill his eyes with images, sounds, colors, to exercising his hands with hard labors and patient tasks?

The thought conceives, the act realizes. The gesture completes the conception, fertilizes it; it achieves it, verifies it, collaborates with or refutes it. It is in walking that one proves movement. Experience, in all domains, brings you an ebb and flow of sensations, of thoughts capable of enriching the inner life. Similarly the tides, with its powerful rhythm, brings new shells and seaweed to the beach. Water from a closed source stagnates, idle air becomes polluted.

If my vision is personal and relative to my subjective being, it doesn't mean that light does not come from outside.

And before all that exploits and dominates, were I to content myself with some sort of moral liberty – sister of resignation and renouncement – were I to refrain, cautiously, from fighting against the organized tyranny of all under the pretext that I am alone, weak, powerless and “that there is nothing to be done!”

Let these idiots, those tired of life, the dilettantes, those who dare not admit their laziness and their cowardice satisfy themselves with a shrunken, atrophied, vapid, and shriveled individuality. Life calls to healthy beings – to those who cannot and will not resign themselves or conform.

The struggle, the joy of effort identify with life, and are its most intense manifestations.

Inner life and outer life, you are the two poles of human activity, the limits of the swinging pendulum, the forever-united forces, through which the being germinates, grows, and blossoms.

—From par delà la mêlée n°32

Two Attitudes

by Pierre Chardon

At the moment of the outbreak of the great conflict of nations, each State mobilized its intellectuals, men of science, journalists, and teachers, for the preaching of falsehood and hatred, obedience and sacrifice. The attitude of these persons was no surprise to us. We knew them to be self-interested worshippers of the Golden Calf, puppets and flunkies of the commercial class, slavish of the State. Similarly we expected to see the Socialist tribunes following in their steps, for the patriotic declarations, those of Jaures and of Bebel alike, had taught us that the real guiding principle of their sham International could be formulated as follows: Workers of all countries, slaughter each other at the command of your masters!

But we should never have thought that unchangeable opponents of the State, fierce despisers of authority, would also begin to howl with the wolves; that they would invite us, voluntarily and without reserve, to assist in “National Defence.” In spite of that, let no one imagine that the majority of Anarchists have followed the propagandist vedettes who have made common cause with their rulers. On the contrary, many have remained anti-patriots and anti-militarists. If the military power has seized and crushed them, they have not sought to justify, to legitimize that power

which they formerly hated, which they hate still more now that the facts have confirmed their anticipations ; now that they have seen actually at work this formidable grinding machine constituted by the militarism of every State.

That is clear. For years we have awaited the advent of the plague that is now devastating the world. The severity of the nations' struggle for "a place in the sun"—the modern form of conquest and expansion—was inevitably bound to bring about a conflict between the various Fatherlands; seeing that they are nothing but so many associations of social criminals, whose sole aim is exploitation and domination. The conflict was inevitably bound to end in warfare, since two groups of nations found themselves face to face: those who had divided between them the colonial territories of the world, and those who desired to drive out the conquerors in order to set themselves up in their place. Moreover, the crisis of intensive militarism that has existed in Europe for twenty years had placed the rulers in the alternative position of ending in positive bankruptcy; each nation hoping that the vanquished would be crushed to such an extent as to allow of reduction of armaments without fear of retaliation.

Since all these things were known to us, and since we are aware of the fact that the struggle between nations is only the enlargement of that social and individual struggle which forms the basis of capital society, our opinions could not suddenly be modified, at the outbreak of war, by the forms under which it presented itself—the methods that it adopted. When a man has seriously considered the social problem and can discern its causes; when he understands that private property produces nearly all the conflicts of mankind; when he is not a humbug, a dabbler, or a creature of impulse; he cannot modify his convictions according to circumstance, nor can he throw upon one caste alone the responsibility of the war. We are revolted by the horrors of war, but we know that the only way of putting an end to them is to attack the real causes of armed conflicts, and not to lend willing aid to any nationality, whichever it be.

Declamations concerning "the horrors of invasion" cannot induce us to become "good soldiers and good Frenchmen," for we are aware that in every war each side seeks to carry the conflict into the enemy's country. When two or more Empires clash together, dragging after them as many large and small allies as possible, in turn purchasing or violating neutrality, we know that we are witnessing the encounter of two opposing Wills to Greed and Domination—not the struggle of Law against Barbarism. Above all, what most disinclines us towards official justifications and patriotic solidarity is that these things are thrust upon us. Which of the Fatherlands can claim to be defending Liberty, when all of them seize upon the individual like ghouls greedy for human flesh, entrain him like an animal, without his being able to consider or discuss the matter,

and send him to the slaughter, regardless of his choice.

We know that some feeble-spirited persons would delude themselves into the belief that they are acting in accordance with their own wills when they adapt themselves to the public opinion which proclaims that "war is a necessary evil," and affirms the necessity of "fighting to a finish," in order that the workers may thereby derive some supposed advantages, direct or indirect. But we prefer to keep our ideal unsullied. Militarism may seize our bodies: our minds it can never subdue. Though we cannot elude authority, though we recognize our powerlessness and numerical inferiority, we do not voluntarily co-operate or acquiesce in the deadly work. An idea that is impotent because it cannot yet enlist a sufficient number of supporters to make it a social force, is not necessarily a false one. It may represent the future, as the unextinguished embers on the primitive hearth represented the possibility of procuring fresh fire.

We know "that if we were to admit to-day the necessity for "National Defence," we must tomorrow admit the usefulness of the Militarism that prepares and ensures it. If we were to join the Holy Alliance, we could not afterwards speak seriously of the spirit of revolt or the class-struggle. So we prefer to keep silence, gagged as we are by Democratic martial law and censorship. Between our activities of yesterday and tomorrow we are unwilling to raise the barrier of a positive contradiction. As for those who have joined the war party, their tongues will be tied by their utterances of today. As they have admitted that a man ought—being propertyless—to engross himself in his "National Inheritance," to the degree of voluntarily sacrificing his life to preserve it intact—they will be compelled to bow down before the frightful political and economic Nationalism whose reign after the war can be foreseen. To the boldest and most combative it will be given to resist "the renascent hydra of Clericalism." While they are wasting their time in cleaving "the Sacred Heart," the traffickers of the sacristy and the cloister will consolidate their economic power by taking advantage of the distress which will be prevalent after the war, when Capital will, at the expense of the workers, recoup to itself the milliards that have been squandered in fighting.

For our part, we shall use these terrible economic results in our work of social criticism, and we shall point out that men have suffered this abominable butchery because they have not adopted our position; because they have preserved that institution of Private Property which we condemn, have respected and considered necessary that Masterdom, that Authority, against which we struggle. There will be greater need than ever for an earnest propaganda, unhampered by professionals and pseudo-intellectuals. Ceasing to fasten our gaze upon Paris and upon distinguished writers; applying rational decentralization, localism, federalism; seeking to create in every district one or more autonomous centers of active, systematic, and unflagging propaganda; we shall resume our task

of criticism, undermining, and education.

For now (the proof of this is not lacking), in our militarized, priest-ridden communities, misery, suffering, and death do not produce lasting and fruitful activities on the part of the people unless there is previously a firmly-rooted ideal of resistance to the rapacious and tyrannical Master; an ideal that may be worked out by reason and not merely by the driving force of sentiment; a slowly-matured ideal, a definite and clear objective founded upon real Liberty, secured by true Equality of conditions; only realizable by the suppression of authoritarian Masterdom. When we resume the work of propaganda, if we are asked what we were doing during the war, we shall reply:—some of us, being unwilling to champion a cause which they deemed was not theirs, evaded their patriotic obligations, others would not or could not follow their example. But, whether fighters or defaulters, we have remained true to ourselves in all circumstances: for what constitutes the superiority of the Free Man—the Anarchist—over his environment, is that he knows how to uphold the integrity of his thought and his dignity, and to defy to the end the blind force that crushes him. Being without illusions, we shall not sink into whining pessimism. We depend only on time, and on effort guided by reason, for the struggle against illusion, against clerical or lay Religionism, that bulwark of malevolent Authority.

—From Freedom, London, October, 1915

(This piece was also published as the brochure *Deux Attitudes* in Paris; it went through two editions, one of which—according to our research—amounted to 10,000 copies.)

Excerpts from letters to E. Armand, from Pierre Chardon (translated by Vincent Stone)

... I am an individualist because I feel as an individual as a starting point, before thinking and feeling as a social being, because I believe that any society that doesn't offer me normal satisfaction of my needs in-exchange for reasonable labor is to be destroyed... I am for individual culture because I am not ignorant to the fact that the ensemble only values what its constituents value, in some cases it's worse than that, because I don't acknowledge the right of any social ensemble to destroy me to assure its own security or existence. I place my independence before my well-being, and my freedom before my security. I would prefer losing my life in defending my freedom to buying my life in slavery.

(October 24th, 1914)

... In place of frequently squabbling over words, of discussing Ikarian futures and their layout, in place of ranting or writing to figure out which is the

most logical label – “anarchist individualist” or “individualist anarchist” how much of our time could be better spent destroying, at least undermining the illusion of respect: ideas of superiority of the master, the adoration of force and money – of honor, morality, national solidarity, necessary obedience, etc... The individual should benefit from the mitigating circumstances, for the fallacy envelopes him from the moment of his birth. Plunged into an ocean of darkness, it is quite excusable that he fall in step with bad shepherds. But those who claim to be “outside of the flock” have they done everything they can to seriously react against social conservatism? I don’t think so. Do they think it better to do it later? The future will tell.

(October 29th, 1914)

Society would have done better to have invented nothing but that with which to aid in murder? Okay. You know Han Ryner’s parable of the Spring: the freshness and the purity depends on the spring, it has no control over what anyone does with it. Under the pretext that the dregs of society have poisoned the spring, do I refuse to go upstream to drink it fresh and pure? Just like you, I have no idea whether humanity will one day stop tearing up its own insides. What I do know is, that my physical and psychic constitution prevents me from returning to a primitive state. I need clothing, lodging, shoes, food (grains, vegetables, meat). Also, I don’t get the idea to emphatically cry out: let all this material acquisition perish, rather than individual autonomy... what a poor autonomy is that of a bear and reindeer hunter, endlessly trembling in fear of encountering an enemy more powerful than he, sometimes coming back to his empty cave or the smoking remains of his family at the entrance of his dwelling, ravaged by some wild animal, reduced to clenching his stomach if fishing and hunting were unfruitful, ignorant of the plow, culture, weaving, curing leather, etc.: separated from the exterior world by swamps, forests, and mountains that no road, no tunnel opens for him. The most absolute dependence, one experiences it in nature. This ancestor did not know the softness of civilization, nor did he know about, following your reasoning, the fatal consequences thereof, for he had absolutely no fear of one-ton pieces of shrapnel. That did not stop him from offing himself very cleanly and very savagely with flint axes and sharp rocks...

Though individualist, I do not deny the social question, I claim it to be an aggregate of questions, of individual causes, that harmony agglomerates and affinity brings near... If I am the Unique, I never forget (and no anarchist can forget) that other uniques are around me, for the glorification of the Me drives toward everything but anarchy...

... I suffer more in fighting alone against the natural environment that if I associate with others, at the cost of a few concessions. Absolute autonomy in the economic domain is not of this world, that’s that! Why always mix the

intellectual or emotional domain with the economic domain? To rejoice or to study, I frequent only those who please me. But if I knit sweaters or knead bread, let's hope that I receive in exchange for my products other products necessary to me, I hardly concern myself if those who wear my sweaters or eat my bread are interesting, if they have a nice "mug" or not.

(November 24th, 1914)

I only know individuals, not collectivities. Among those whose life is hardly privileged, not to mention those who Moloch crushes and who can never blossom, we do not find delicate and refined sensibilities, marvelous intelligences. Among those to whom life has been gracious – servility, baseness, bestial authority, do they not reign as much as in the "proletariat"?

Also, I reiterate to you, I am not the advocate of a class, but I feel I have something in common with all of those "dispossessed" deprived of material "heritage," and who feel and understand that they must try to conquer it. In reality, I am sympathetic to every individual who struggles against Supremacy, whatever their social situation may be, but I am quite forced to note that the rebels, the enemies of constraint, are rarely found among the beneficiaries of this supremacy. That is why we often address the "dispossessed" rather than the others, because we know that the bourgeois cannot come to us for good reason.

Since I belong to no chapel, it does not follow that I go hot and cold in turns. I do not hide my opinions and I don't modify them according to company. People know everywhere where I am going and where I am allowed and that I am an enemy of the State, an unremitting anti-patriot, contemptuous of property, partisan of individual and consequently collective revolt, since at the base of all numbers there is the singular. There is no equivocation. I do not deceive those around me. I am neither friend nor enemy of the people, considered as a class, but I feel camaraderie for every INDIVIDUAL who fights against domination, be it moral or material.

(November 9th, 1915).

Pierre Chardon

By M.P.

(Translated by Vincent Stone)

May 2nd, 1919! On this day Pierre Chardon, he who animated and enlightened our milieu for too short a time, disappeared, alas! He was barely 27 years old and would have been without contest one of the most ardent defenders of our ideals, had a brutal death not taken him too soon from our friendship. For

already he was able to make his presence felt with his vast intellect, his spirit of revolt, his distrust of opinion, continuously giving a pounding to bourgeois prejudice and oppressive society.

It is not without emotion that I evoke his almost childlike silhouette which was topped by a striking face that could not disappear from the memory of those who encountered it: a face upon which the clutches of evil who must have brought him here had made their mark. A vast forehead surpassed by a lion-like head of hair that covered inquisitive eyes, eyes that shined on occasion with a malicious glow – all accompanied by a sarcastic smile, a smile which knew how to soften for the friends he welcomed with fraternity.

Like Remy de Gourmont, whose philosophy he admired, he would have preferred that people didn't know him and often his manner puzzled and arrested one's trust, for he bristled with irony and sarcasm like defensive weapons. However, nothing but affectionate comprehension, nothing but tenderness under the surly armor, and how he let his spirit show with confidence when someone guessed it!

An autodidact, he possessed all of the qualities of an organizer. For, with an intellect undaunted by any human problem, he achieved an invincible will that neither physical suffering nor the moral ordeals he went through could shake. The inner griefs that tortured him never diminished the surprising activity he demonstrated. The philosophy of effort, struggle, hope, and constant response which were his helped him to get through the painful stages of a precarious life, dully worn down. "Never has sadness led to despondency in me," he wrote to me from Nice a few weeks before his death, while he knew he was irremediably condemned, he continued to work until he exhausted all of his energies.

Until his last breath, he thought of the work he had set out to do: the publishing of *la mêlée*, while he no longer could get up, while every effort meant suffering, in the last days of his life, I can say the last hours, he worried about the publishing of this journal which had become the focus of his activity, the main goal of his efforts. He wanted to hand off the torch, not diminished, but reanimated with a new clarity.

"So long as there is a drop of invigorating blood circulating in its veins, I believe a being should fight and react." That, he accomplished. For he loved life, multiple and varied life which his delicate and tender soul could taste in its diversity and beauty. "You must not run away from life, he wrote me, but pull from it the maximum happiness; to 'return from the dead,' to open our eyes on ourselves and others, to be able to taste and appreciate the beauty everywhere it resides. In the simplest of material forms there is a beauty, a harmony. Only he who can see and feel the relations hidden between beings

and things, he whose eyes of flesh are completed with eyes of spirit, knows how to live the intense life, not this artificial intensity of modern life, but the complete life, filled with numerous experiences, slowly savored, in their time, without haste...”

And it is because he had this sort of understanding that revealed the secret harmonies between beings and things, that in him we find this curious mix of realism and poetry that led him to a smiling skepticism, to that subtle irony with which he sprinkled his conversation, sometimes grave, sometimes light-hearted, never indifferent.

The social and economic question interested him to the highest degree, he was a disciple of Proudhon and he harbored a special project which he often spoke about with friends and which he would have no doubt realized were it not for the difficulties he encountered. The project? That of forming a fraternal community based on a work association. He closely studied the american colonies which, in the last century, blossomed out of the soils of what was then the land of liberty: Shakers; Economists; Zoarites; Perfectionists; Fourieristes, etc. He carefully studied the weaknesses of all of these undertakings, the most of which were ephemeral – weaknesses that doomed them to certain and premature failure.

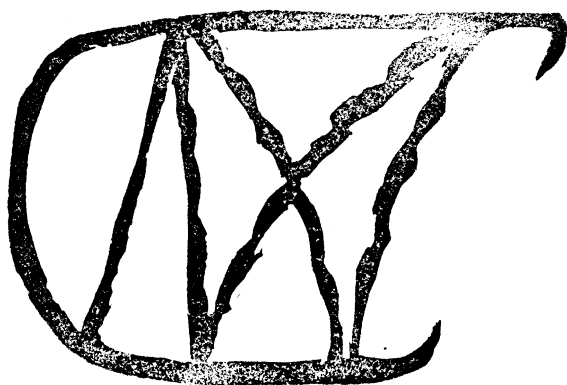
But already the foundations of this community that he wanted to establish were in place, and so were its essential elements, as much at the material level as at the spiritual, and here's how he understood how to organize the future community from the point of view of intersexual relations: “We will not recognize the couple – legal or illegal, it matters little – but only the individual-associate, every individual – man or woman – will have their own share, so as to have guarantees against authority and the constraint of his/her spouse. For established households, the share of a woman will be the equal to that of the man, the share of a couple being shared in halves. Each individual will have a room. They are each free to live alone or with a spouse, with the possibility for them to isolate themselves when they please and to end sexual relations at will, singular or plural, that s/he keeps. Absolute freedom with these principles: neither venality, nor constraint. Children are raised at the cost of the community, he belongs to the mother who carried and nursed him. In the case of sexual competitions, it is the will of the woman which determines all. In the case of spousal abuse, the community will intervene to protect the weaker party and his/her free will”.

This project haunted him to the end. He had already gathered comrades who were capable of making a successful farm work, which would be the basis of this association, but with him gone, the project went too, for none of the others could give it the love, the intelligence he did.

This exemplary being who had a magnificent future before him left to those who knew him intimately an unforgettable memory and the regret for his death remains forever in their hearts.

— M.P.

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